

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 041847Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6966

INFO USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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E.O. 11652 NA

TAGS: PINT, GT

SUBJECT: RACE FOR PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

1. SUMMARY: DECISION OF THE TWO OPPOSITION PARTIES TO BACK PRO-GOVERNMENT CANDIDATE DONALDO ALVAREZ RUIZ HAS MADE HIM FAVORITE IN RACE FOR PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, RIGHT-WING MLN FACES POLITICAL ISOLATION AND PRESENT GOVERNMENT COALITION APPEARS LIKELY TO BE RESHUFFLED ALONG LINES MORE SATISFACTORY TO PRESIDENT LAUGERUD. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER MONTHS OF MANEUVERING AND WEEKS OF IMPASSE, IT APPEARS THAT CANDIDATE OF PRO-GOVERNMENT PID PARTY, DONALDO ALVAREZ RUIZ, HAS BECOME FAVORITE IN JUNE 15 ELECTION OF PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS. SUPPORT LONG DENIED HIM BY COALITION ALLIES MLN AND CAO CAME JUNE 1 FROM UNEXPECTED QUARTER: OPPOSITION DCG AND PR PARTIES GAVE THEIR ENDORSEMENT AND THEREBY AT LEAST 37 OUT OF 61 CONGRESSMEN.

3. PR AND DCG DECISIONS HAD BEEN TAKEN SEVERAL DAYS

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BEFORE. CONGRESSMAN JOSE LUIS CRUZ SALAZAR TOLD

EMBOFFS MAY 29 PR HAD DECIDED WITHDRAW ITS OWN CANDIDATE, JORGE GARCIA-GRANADOS, AND THROW ITS SUPPORT TO PID IN HOPES OF "BRINGING NEW BALANCE OF POWER INTO CONGRESS." HE SAID THAT PR WAS LESS INTERESTED IN POSITIONS ON JUNTA DIRECTIVA THAN IN SECURING POSITIONS ON SEVERAL IMPORTANT COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.

4. DCG SECRETARY-GENERAL VINICIO CEREZO TOLD US MAY 30 THAT DCG HAD ALSO DECIDED TO BACK ALVAREZ. DCG WAS ALSO MOST INTERESTED IN POSITIONS ON KEY COMMITTEES, PARTICULARLY FINANCE AND ECONOMY. (OPPOSITION CONGRESSMEN HOLD ONLY 15 OF 91 COMMITTEE SEATS. THERE ARE NOT OPPOSITON MEMBERS ON ECONOMY AND ONLY ONE, FROM PR, ON FINANCE.) CEREZO WAS PERFECTLY FRANK IN ADMITTING THAT DCG'S SUPPORT OF PID WAS A "POLITICAL MANEUVER" DESIGNED TO DAMAGE THE MLN.

5. ALVAREZ HAS NOW BEGUN TO ACT MORE AND MORE LIKE A WINNER. HE TOLD PRESS JUNE 2 THAT PID WAS "PLEASED TO ACCEPT" SUPPORT OF PR AND DCG, AND ADDED THAT "THERE ARE MANY IDEAS IN COMMON AMONGST US." WHEN ASKED TO ASSESS SIGNIFICANCE OF EMERGING SCENARIO HE ADDED THAT "NEW MEN, NEW IDEAS WILL BE ARRIVING." A CAO DEPUTY TOLD US MAY 31 THAT CAO WOULD JOIN BANDWAGON AND ALSO SUPPORT ALVAREZ, NOTING BITTERLY THAT MLN LEADERS HAD BEEN CALLING CAO "TRAITORS" FOR NOT SUPPORTING MLN CANDIDATE HECTOR ARAGON.

6. COMMENTS FROM MLN MEMBERS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY BITTER AND SHRILL. RODRIGO VALLADARES ANNOUNCED JUNE 2 THAT WEAKENING OF MLN-PID COALITION WOULD "SIGNIFY A WEAKENING OF THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF." MLN DISSIDENT GABRIEL MARTINEZ DEL ROSAL COMMENTED THAT VICE PRESIDENT MARIO SANDOVAL WAS "LEADING MLN TO RUIN." THERE HAS SO FAR BEEN NOTHING BUT DEAFENING SILENCE FROM SANDOVAL HIMSELF.

7. COMMENT: OPPOSITION PARTIES, GIVEN OPPORTUNITY TO VENT YEARS OF ACCUMULATED RESENTMENT AGAINST MLN (WHICH RAN CONGRESS WITH IRON AND ARROGANT HAND 1970-74), HAVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BEEN ONLY TOO WILLING TO DO SO. MLN NOW FACES VERY REAL PROSPECT OF POLITICAL ISOLATION. ONE OF FEW OPTIONS LEFT TO SANDOVAL WOULD BE TO BUCKLE AND "KEEP UP APPEARANCES" BY THROWING MLN SUPPORT TO ALVAREZ. ANOTHER WOULD BE TO BRING INTENSE PRESSURE ON PRESIDENT LAUGERUD TO INTERVENE AND PICK COMPROMISE CANDIDATE - ACTION MLN HAS UP TO NOW STRONGLY OPPOSED ON GROUNDS LAUGERUD UNLIKELY TO PICK ANYONE ACCEPTABLE TO SANDOVAL. NOW MLN

HAS LITTLE TO LOSE. COMPROMISE COULD BE EITHER SOME  
PID MEMBER OTHER THAN ALVAREZ (LESSENING SLIGHTLY MLN'S  
HUMILIATION) OR SOME MLN MEMBER OTHER THAN ARAGON. THERE  
ARE RUMORS MLN CONGRESSMAN CARLOS CIFUENTES WOULD BE  
ACCEPTABLE TO LAUGERUD.

8. OTHER MLN OPTIONS INCLUDE IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE FROM  
COALITION, BECOMING RIGHT-WING OPPOSITION TO GOVERNMENT,  
AND ALLOWING LAUGERUD BUILD NEW COALITION MORE TO HIS  
LIKING AROUND PID, PR AND CAO. OR MLN COULD TURN ITS  
ACCUSTOMED PRACTICES OF THREATS AND INTIMIDATION AGAINST LAUGERUD'  
ASSOCIATES IN ORDER REMIND PRESIDENT OF HOW DANGEROUS AN  
OPPONENT MLN CAN BE. THIS IS SURELY ROAD CLOSEST TO  
SANDOVAL'S HEART, BUT HE IS ALSO SHREWD ENOUGH TO KNOW  
THAT LAUGERUD WOULD REPLY WITH FULLEST FORCE OF GOVERNMENT  
AND ARMY. SANDOVAL HAS NO HOPE OF SUCCESS OR EVEN  
SURVIVAL IN SUCH CONFRONTATION AND THEREFORE LIKELY HE  
WILL OPT FOR SOME KIND OF COMPROMISE.

9. IN ANY EVENT COMPROMISE OR BUCKLING UNDER CAN ONLY  
POSTPONE, AND NOT PREVENT, WHAT NOW APPEARS INEVITABLE  
RUPTURE BETWEEN PID AND MLN AND LATTER'S DEPARTURE FROM  
COALITION. RUPTURE COULD ONLY BE AVERTED BY DEPARTURE  
OR REMOVAL FROM SCENE OF MARIO SANDOVAL, AT PRESENT AN  
UNLIKELY PROSPECT. END COMMENT.  
MELOY

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## Message Attributes

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